

THE MILITANT

INSIDE
Int'l Educational Conference to discuss
strengthening unions, building SWP
— PAGES 8-10

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE VOL. 87/NO. 11 MARCH 20, 2023

Working people in East Palestine fight for control over their future

BY TONY LANE

EAST PALESTINE, Ohio — Working people, family farmers and small-business people in this area continue to seek a way to defend their family's health, homes and livelihoods in the wake of the Feb. 3 derailment of a Norfolk Southern train, subsequent fire and burn-off that spread toxic chemicals into the air, water and soil. And several rail unions are speaking out against the handling of the derailment by the rail bosses and the government, raising the need for workers to have more say over the conditions they work under.

Working people in East Palestine lined up March 4 to take advantage of a food and supplies bank, where vendors set up with water purifiers, well drillers and a range of other products. Worker-correspondents for the *Militant* spoke to people there, all of whom lived in the evacuation zone and had left their homes.

"My 9-month-old daughter came
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Join campaign to win readers, get out books, fund 'Militant'

BY JOHN STUDER

Join us in expanding the reach of the *Militant*!

The paper is launching an eight-week campaign to increase its readership, get out books by Socialist Workers Party and other revolutionary leaders and raise \$165,000 for the paper from March 18-May 16.

The *Militant* is unique for giving a voice to workers' resistance against boss attacks and other effects of the crisis of the capitalist rulers and their political parties, and to our efforts to build and use our unions. No other paper explains that every political question we face — from the disastrous derailment in East Palestine, Ohio, to opposing Moscow's murderous invasion of Ukraine, to the fight to end women's oppression — is a class question. No other paper presents a road forward for workers, to build our own party, a labor party based on the unions, to help lead all those
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As battle rages over Bakhmut Defend Ukraine independence!

'Fight Moscow's invasion, and for workers' rights'



KHPG/Ivan Popov

Ivan Popov holds sign, "No to the war!" at "Peter the Great" statue in St. Petersburg, Russia, a year into Moscow's war in Ukraine. Solo pickets, "flower protests," green ribbon movement keep opposition to Putin's repressive regime, solidarity with Ukrainian people visible.

BY ROY LANDERSEN

As Russian President Vladimir Putin sends wave after wave of Russian conscripts against Ukrainian forces in Bakhmut, they confront fierce resistance from Ukrainians determined to defeat the invasion. His regime also faces opposition at home to its war, protests from Russian soldiers sent to the slaughter and renewed conflicts in other countries where Moscow is trying to extend its sway.

In the longest battle since the invasion began, Russian forces in the east have partly surrounded the bombed-out city of Bakhmut. It has little strategic value, but the Kremlin says seizing Bakhmut would extend its control of the Donbas region, which Putin claims is now part of Russia. Ukrainian forces are now being reinforced in a continuing battle.

Fight to overturn ban on 'Militant' in Florida prison wins new support

BY SETH GALINSKY

"Blackwater Correctional Facility's impoundment action infringes upon the First Amendment rights of both the *Militant's* publisher and its incarcerated subscribers," Samuel Morley, general counsel of the Florida Press Association, wrote to prison officials urging the ban on issue no. 4 of the socialist newsweekly be reversed. More letters like this are coming in.

Officials at Blackwater, a privately run Florida state facility, claimed Feb. 1 that two front-page articles in that issue are a "threat to the security" or "rehabilitation."
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Tens of thousands of convicts conscripted into the mercenary Wagner army, used in frontal attacks to try to wear down Ukrainian defenses, have been killed. With these brigades defeated,
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Protests in Iran demand answers, end to poisoning of schoolchildren

BY SETH GALINSKY

Angry parents, teachers and students protested across Iran March 7 in the face of widespread reports of poisoning by toxic gases of more than 1,000 students at over 125 primary and secondary girls schools in more than a dozen provinces over the last four months.

No one has claimed responsibility and the government at first said little or that the reports were exaggerated.
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Workers at Hawaii Kaiser hospitals strike for more staffing, higher pay



Militant/Neil Tupas

Over 500 hospital workers, members of United Public Workers union, struck Kaiser hospitals in Maui Feb. 22, fighting against bosses' attacks — low pay, cuts in sick days, low staffing levels.

BY NEIL TUPAS

MAUI, Hawaii — Over 500 hospital workers walked out and set up picket lines Feb. 22 at the Maui Memorial Medical Center, Kula Hospital and Lanai Community Hospital here. The strikers, members of United Public Workers Local 646, voted by 97% to reject the hospitals' "last, best and final offer" after eight months of failed contract negotiations.

The nurses' aides, therapists, technicians, groundskeepers, housekeepers,

cooks, laundry workers and others say wage increases and hiring more workers are their key demands.

Kaiser Permanente acquired the three hospitals six years ago and has since cut back workers' sick days, personal time off and staffing. Management floats workers between departments to fill the inevitable holes in their coverage.

Picket lines at the main hospital entrances are lively, with music and food cooked by the workers. Strikers are putting out signs.
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Iran protests demand answers

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Mistrust of the bourgeois-clerical regime — among working people and especially among oppressed nationalities like the Kurds, Baluchs, Azerbaijanis and Arabs — has mushroomed as a result of its brutal attacks on demonstrators protesting the death of Zhina Amini after her arrest by the hated “morality” police last September.

More than 500 protesters were killed by the regime’s thugs and thousands were arrested during several months of demonstrations. The government slandered peaceful protesters as rioters, tortured many of those it arrested and carried out the death penalty against four protesters.

Nonetheless, confidence among working people that they can fight the regime’s assaults has grown and political space has expanded.

Call for independent investigation

Prominent Sunni cleric Maulana Abdul-Hamid — a central leader of the struggle in Sistan-Baluchistan province where weekly protests of thousands continue — spoke for many in Iran when he asked, “What is happening? Why cannot the government reveal the cause of the poisoning of these female students? Who can believe that senior officials do not know what is going on?”

“Many believe, and perhaps this is close to the truth, that this incident is suppression of the protests,” he added.

Despite virulent attacks on him in the regime’s press, Abdul-Hamid has been speaking out against the dress code for women; in favor of freedom of speech, the press and of worship;

and for an end to the death penalty.

“The perpetrators of student poisoning should know that students are the red line for teachers,” said the Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers Trade Union in its call for nationwide protests March 7.

The teachers’ union called for the formation of “a committee of independent civil, trade union and political activists, along with a group of doctors, expert professors and human rights lawyers to conduct a comprehensive review of the issue of school poisoning in order to clearly examine the facts and realities. The result should be made known to the people of Iran.”

The union initiated more than 25 actions across the country, which also called on the authorities to halt plans to sell off some school buildings, to release imprisoned teachers and students, and to rehire teachers fired for participating in protests. University students also held protests in several cities.

While many protests took place without problems, some were attacked by police and Revolutionary Guard Corps with tear gas and other weapons, including in Sanandaj in the Kurdish region. In Fars province 12 teachers and seven students and parents were arrested and then released.

Accounts from Tehran indicate that special repressive units occupied the rally area near the Majlis (parliament) building and that some teachers and others who came to protest were arrested. Others who had turned out regrouped in small numbers nearby.

Participants included a teacher who had been fired some years ago for



Karaj, Iran, protest, one of many initiated by teachers union in Iran March 7, called for commission independent of regime to investigate reports of poisoning at girls schools.

his outspoken views. He said he welcomed the stance taken by Abdul-Hamid in Baluchistan. Two women, both homemakers, commented that this issue is separate from that of compulsory hijab. Whether you have hijab or not, they said, your child’s health and life are in danger.

There were debates among those who turned out over how to conduct themselves at the protest. A small group briefly chanted, “Death to the child-killing regime!” Others thought the political focus should be on demanding that the government take action to stop the attacks and arrest the perpetrators.

In Isfahan an eyewitness reported that a small group gathered in front of the Department of Education there and was attacked by local police and the Special Squads. Some were beaten up and dragged into the building. The teachers still outside warned passersby not to stop and to move on. Motorized units of the Special Squads circled the building and surrounding streets all morning, ordering groups of more than two people to disperse.

Regime’s cynicism

In the face of mounting anger, Dr. Saeed Karimi, vice president of the Ministry of Health, announced March 6 that a committee of 30 scientists and doctors has been investigating the poisoning and is visiting

schools that were affected.

Karimi alleged that “less than 10%” of the students were actually sick. The rest of the symptoms he claimed were caused by “anxiety” and “psychological effects.”

Yadullah Javani, a leader of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps —the main tool of the government in attacking peaceful protests — cynically tried to deflect the anger by charging that “behind the scenes of this crime and evil conspiracy to poison the girls are the same 44-year enemies of the Iranian nation” who backed the “Women, life, freedom” protests. The regime claims the U.S. and Israeli governments incited the protests. Javani boasted that the regime is responsible for “success for women” in their “scientific, cultural and social status.”

“Awakening” and other women’s rights groups in Iran have answered that falsehood. “In Iran women fought many years to get the right to education,” they wrote recently, “until finally they were able to achieve this natural right to some extent through the establishment of public schools.”

Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei stated March 6 that the poisoning is “an unforgivable crime” and it would be “severely punished.”

But the “crime” the regime seems most interested in stamping out is anyone who questions its rule.

THE MILITANT

Jew-hatred must always be answered!

The rightist antisemitic demonstration at ‘Parade,’ a Broadway play about the frame-up and 1915 lynching of Leo Frank, a Jewish factory manager, points to the importance of taking on Jew-hatred. The ‘Militant’ explains Jew-hatred is a deadly trap for all working people.

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“Parade” cast condemned antisemitic protest Feb. 21 at play’s first night on Broadway.

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Telephone: (212) 244-4899

Fax: (212) 244-4947

E-mail: themilitant@mac.com

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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the *Militant’s* views. These are expressed in editorials.

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Communist League in Canada advances working-class program

BY JOHN STEELE

MONTREAL — Beverly Bernardo, Communist League candidate in the March 13 provincial by-election in the Montreal electoral constituency of Saint-Henri-Sainte-Anne, brought her fighting working-class program to some 65 people at a candidates' debate Feb. 28, sponsored by the Solidarity Saint-Henri community organization.

"Many of the questions we have been asked here are about what candidates are promising to do for us if they are elected," Bernardo told the meeting. In contrast to the capitalist parties, "the Communist League's starting point is the need for working people to rely on ourselves to fight for what we need." She pointed to the openings to build solidarity with union struggles as more working people resist the impact of the deepening capitalist crisis.

"We can't rely on parties that defend the interests of the bosses," she said. "Through our struggles our unions need to build a labor party." Along that road, we can "organize and mobilize working people to replace Canada's government of the ruling rich with a workers and farmers government."

Bernardo is a factory worker and member of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers union.

Seven of the 11 candidates participated in the debate, but not the one from the governing Coalition for the Future of Quebec (CAQ).

Sharply different class perspectives were expressed about CAQ's Law 21 and Law 96. Law 21, which is in effect, bans teachers and some other public-sector workers from wearing religious symbols on the job. Law 96, adopted last May, which is being debated, targets English speakers, declaring French the official language

and according language rights only to English-speakers born here. After six months living in Quebec, immigrants will not be able to access social services in English. Quebec Premier Francois Legault claims this is needed to protect the French language and culture, which he alleges are under threat from working people who speak English.

"The goal of these laws is to weaken the ability of working people to defend our common class interests by dividing us along religious and language lines," Bernardo said. "They should be opposed by workers and our unions."

"I support Law 96," Andreanne Fiola, the Parti Quebecois candidate, told the meeting. "You can see the problem here in Saint-Henri-Sainte-Anne where a third of the population speaks English."

"The threat to the French language from immigrants simply does not exist," Bernardo said. "In the factory where I work, the language of work is French. But co-workers also speak Spanish, Swahili, English and many other languages. That is not a problem. To the contrary, it enriches us."

'Politically correct' publishing bosses censor Roald Dahl

BY TERRY EVANS

"Taking care for the imagination and fast-developing minds of young children," the editors at Puffin, a division of Penguin Random House, pontificated Feb. 24, "is a responsibility." This was why they had to bowdlerize 17 titles by children's author Roald Dahl. The books include *The Fantastic Mr. Fox*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *James and the Giant Peach*.

What bosses at the world's biggest publisher of children's books meant by



Militant/John Steele

"We can't rely on parties that defend the interests of the bosses," Beverly Bernardo, the Communist League candidate in Canada, inset, told audience of 65 at candidates debate sponsored by the Solidarity Saint-Henri community organization in Montreal Feb. 28.



Speaking from the audience, a doctor from Madagascar said, "Under Law 96 immigrant patients are forced to try to communicate with medical personnel in French, a language they do necessarily understand or speak. This is wrong and medically dangerous. Adequate health care is a basic right."

The meeting also debated the crisis in housing, rising hunger, care of the elderly and education. Several participants unfurled a large banner calling on the Quebec minister of education to allocate sufficient funds to Quebec's Centers of Popular Education. Without funding the Saint-Henri center's existence will be threatened.

Win 'Militant' readers, raise funds

Continued from front page

oppressed by capital to take political power into our own hands.

The campaign will broaden and deepen the presentation of the Socialist Workers Party program to workers, farmers and other exploited producers at labor actions, social protests and door to door in cities, towns and rural areas. Communist Leagues in Australia, Canada and the U.K. will join in the effort.

An integral part of the campaign will be preparing for and building the Socialist Workers Party International Educational Conference at Oberlin College in Ohio that will be held June 8-11.

A range of books is being offered at a substantial discount with a subscription. These titles help workers see today's struggles as part of a line of march of our class to end all exploitation and oppression. Central will be getting *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward* by Jack Barnes, Mary-Alice Waters and Steve Clark into the hands of as many working people as possible. It's the best introduction to the Socialist Workers Party, its working-class program and activity.

The *Militant* is encouraging its readers to contribute to the \$165,000 Militant

Fighting Fund. Contributions from working people are the paper's only source of funds. Its readers and other workers make it possible to strengthen our coverage of workers' struggles as well as the big shifts underway in world politics and to cover the paper's weekly production expenses.

The goals for the campaign are to increase subscriptions to the *Militant* by 1,350 and get out 1,350 books. This effort will be tied to bold election campaigns run by the SWP and Communist Leagues.

Ten other books are also on special. They are: *Labor, Nature, and the Evolution of Humanity*; *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*; *Are They Rich Because They're Smart?*; *The Clintons' Anti-Working-Class Record*; *Women in Cuba: The Making of a Revolution Within the Revolution*; *The Jewish Question*; *Teamster Rebellion*; *The Turn to Industry: Forging a Proletarian Party*; *Tribunes of the People and the Trade Unions*; and *Cuba and the Coming American Revolution*. In addition, all Pathfinder books with or without a subscription are available at a 20% discount during the campaign.

To join in campaigning, contact distributors near you that are listed on page 11.

"taking care" involved purging Dahl's characters of descriptions he gave them as being "fat," "ugly" or "crazy." Their cleansing also included excising all mention of "whiteness," including in a description of bed sheets.

Alongside this they scrubbed out references to "mothers and fathers" and "brothers and sisters." The new sanitized editions replace those terms with "parents" and "siblings." But wiping out references to biological differences in the name of "inclusivity" in fact reinforces anti-scientific notions. It turns "men" and "women" into subjective categories that can simply be changed at will, part of denying the reality of women's oppression under class society and diminishing the necessity of struggling to end it.

Puffin bosses' eradication of "offensive" terms was recommended to the publisher by consultants from an outfit called Inclusive Minds. They claim to speak for those with "lived experience," by which they mean people the company says are oppressed. They say their self-righteous mission is to rampage through literature "reviewing language that can be damaging and perpetuate harmful stereotypes."

The woke censorship of Dahl's works was blessed by the Roald Dahl Story Company, which now manages the late author's copyright and is owned by entertainment giant Netflix.

The class bias of the meritocratic-minded censors was not far below the surface. For example, in Dahl's *The Witches* the phrase "even if she is working as a cashier in a supermarket or typing letters for a businessman" is wholly rewritten. It's replaced with the phrase "even if she is working as a top scientist or running a business." As if transforming cashiers into capitalists in a classic work of literature does anything to advance the status of women!

Elsewhere the censors impose their own predilections — for "good" writ-

ing and subject matter — for ones they deem unacceptable.

In *Matilda*, the girl at the center of the story describes the impact of her early reading experiences: "She went on olden-day sailing ships with Joseph Conrad. She went to Africa with Ernest Hemingway and to India with Rudyard Kipling." But the authors that Dahl describes are on the politically correct "cancelled" list. Dahl's book now contains authors favored by the more right-thinking editors. It says "she went to nineteenth century estates with Jane Austen," and "she went to California with John Steinbeck."

The censors act on a class outlook based on their deeply held belief they must administer and regulate the lives of working people on behalf of the capitalist ruling families, including what we and our children read. Underneath their feigned empathy for the oppressed is a view that the working class is backward and reactionary. They think we can't be trusted to learn from past classics and must be prevented from forming our own opinions.

Following an outcry over their censorship, bosses at Puffin announced they would keep the old unexpurgated versions in print as well as print and promote their new woke versions. Perhaps they think that this way they can both push their woke line and maximize their profits.

Next in line for a rewrite, the *New York Post* reports, are Ian Fleming's James Bond novels. Depending on the censors' zeal, there may not be a lot left of the philandering British spy in the new versions.

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UMWA coal miners return to work, contract fight continues

BY SUSAN LAMONT

ATLANTA — Coal miners who had been on strike for 23 months at Warrior Met in Brookwood, Alabama, one of the longest and most bitter strikes in recent years, began the process of returning to work March 2. The steps to end the hard-fought strike followed the company's acceptance of the United Mine Workers of America's "unconditional offer to return to work" made in mid-February by UMWA President Cecil Roberts.

Warrior Met Coal said it asked for the union's "cooperation and assistance so that we can begin the process for a safe and orderly return to work" by striking union members. "We look forward to the UMWA's cooperation in these efforts to return the striking miners to work while we continue to negotiate in good faith to reach a new contract," said the company in a statement quoted by the online news site al.com Feb. 20.

Starting March 2, strikers seeking to return to work at Warrior Met must pass a drug test, followed by a physical. Once those tests are completed, miners will wait for a call from the company to take an eight-hour safety retraining course, veteran miner Otis Sims told the *Militant* March 3. After that, they can return to work underground. Workers can request their old job, but there are no guarantees they will get it. Sims was working as a longwall operator at the No. 4 mine when the strike started.

Warrior Met imposes deep cuts

Warrior Met was set up by the biggest outstanding creditors when the previous owner, Jim Walter Resources, declared bankruptcy in 2015. The new owners told miners they had to accept deep cuts in wages, benefits and working conditions or the mines would be closed, with a promise to restore cuts as the company got back on its feet.

But when the contract expired in 2021, the new company proposal offered little change over the previous contract. The miners overwhelmingly rejected it, vowing to stay out until they won more. Picket lines went up April 1, 2021, and the miners began their long fight to defend themselves and their union against Warrior Met's assaults. They won solidarity and financial support from other UMWA locals and districts, as well as from unions around the country.

Company bosses hired scabs to restart production at Warrior Met's two mines, No. 4 and No. 7, and at the prep plant

and central shops. These replacement workers are a combination of experienced miners from other states as well as Alabama, new workers who recently got their mining papers, and some union members who crossed the picket line.

Over time the company was able to get production going at both mines, filling orders for metallurgical coal used in steel-making around the world and raking in big profits for company owners, despite the strike.

Warrior Met reported Feb. 15 that the company's fourth quarter of 2022 earnings "marked the conclusion of an exceedingly strong financial year for Warrior," al.com reported.

Union members will continue to get union strike benefits until they get their first Warrior Met paycheck. As of March 2, the union picket lines had been taken down, Sims said.

Many of the original 1,100 miners who went on strike in 2021 have gotten other jobs, including at two other union mines in the area.

The union will fight to get the jobs back for 41 workers whom the company refuses to allow to return to work, claiming they were responsible for picket line violence. This group in-

Hawaii hospital workers strike for more staffing, pay

Continued from front page

ting in eight-hour shifts to maintain the lines 24/7. A roving van drives between picket locations to relieve strikers, and deliver water and food.

"People and the community have been very kind, bringing food, stopping by to give support, donating their time and walking with the picket line," Tamara Manley, a picket captain, told the *Militant*. "This is not about greed or money, this is about everybody being treated with dignity and respect. We want to end short staffing and the mandatory 16-hour days."

"The hospital didn't value the hard work and commitment that nurses' aides, technicians and cooks were doing," said Elen Quema, a housekeeper at Maui Memorial Medical Center. "During the pandemic, all the jobs were understaffed. They said we shouldn't complain, just follow the rules."

The effects of the strike are being felt in the hospitals as trash pickups, changing linens and room cleanings aren't covered. "We provided the hospital with 10 days' advance notice of the strike,"

U.K. and internationally that are working class in program, course of conduct and composition, taking jobs in metal working and in garment.

An effective advocate of the party's program, she stood as a parliamentary candidate and worked full time for the London Pathfinder office, helping expand the distribution of books by Socialist Workers Party and other revolutionary working-class leaders.

The London branch of the Communist League is hosting a meeting to celebrate her life and political contributions on March 26. Further details will be announced in the *Militant*.



Militant/Susan LaMont

International Longshoremen's Association members from three East Coast ports joined solidarity rally of 1,500 for striking Warrior Met miners in Brookwood, Alabama, Aug. 4, 2021.

cludes some of the union's most active members, like Antwon Mcghee, who worked at the No. 7 mine for 17 years.

"Our strike was very important," Mcghee told this *Militant* worker-correspondent March 5. "We set an example of what solidarity can accomplish and let the world know about our fight."

He and others who have been blacklisted by Warrior Met face trespassing and other trumped-up charges, but so far no court dates have been set, Mc-

ghee said. "We did nothing illegal, but the company wants to silence us."

"Union members will go back to work with their seniority and with their union," he said. "Then we will pursue negotiations to win a contract. Some of us are going back with mixed emotions, but this seems to be our best alternative at this point." The company had refused to negotiate seriously with the union for some time, Mcghee said. "There was no positive motion."

said United Public Workers' Hawaii State Director Kalani Werner. "They try to operate business as usual."

"You know the saying, 'You don't know what you have until it's gone,'" registered nurse Jennifer Alakai told the media, explaining how nurses were changing linens and taking out trash. Alakai said she supported the strike and had walked the picket lines.

"We are doing this for the next generation," said Maui Memorial Medical Center housekeeper Margarita Javalde.

The United Public Workers union was founded in 1944 by Hawaiian plantation workers determined to win better

wages, hours and conditions of work. They were inspired by the success of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union's organizing efforts.

The union won the right to collective bargaining for public-sector workers in 1970. The union then affiliated with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees and today represents some 13,000 workers.

Union members from other AFSCME locals, Hawaii Government Employees Association, United Nurses Associations of California, Operative Plasterers' and Cement Masons' Local 630 and the longshore union have joined the pickets.

New Jersey sanitation workers end strike, union comes out stronger

BY JANET POST

CAMDEN, N.J. — Some 130 striking sanitation workers here, members of Teamsters Local 115, voted 64-41 March 5 to accept Waste Management's latest contract offer and returned to work three days later.

On strike since Jan. 31, "we pushed the company back on some things, and the union was solid on the picket line," shop steward Ivan James told the *Militant*. "The strike made us stronger for the next contract."

"Not one of us crossed the picket line," said striker Bob Klein, a driver with 26-years seniority. The bosses "didn't want us to strike and set a precedent for other workers."

After the company offered almost nothing in raises, the workers won an increase of \$1.50 an hour plus 4% the first year and 3% the second and third years of the contract. They will receive a \$1,500 signing bonus for workers hired before 2018, \$1,000 for newer hires. Health coverage remains the same until future discussions at December's open enrollment.

While the union had pushed back some of the two-tier wage provisions in the past, new hires working residential routes will take five years to reach parity, and on commercial routes, three years.

The company is also insisting on its "right" to use video cameras in truck cabs that can "go live" any time, a move strongly opposed by workers.

The bosses are also instituting stricter discipline for use of cellphones — two warnings, then a worker can be fired. "What good is a wage percentage, if you can get fired for making a cellphone call or eating a pretzel, then don't have a job?" striker Bill Atkinson said.

The company had brought in some 80 replacement workers from non-union yards around the country. And the bosses brought in union drivers from a Waste Management yard in Kentucky, telling them they were going to be doing "disaster relief." When they got here and found out it was to cross the picket line of union members, they used their own money to fly home, James said.

Celia Pugh: 50-year builder of communist movement in the UK

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN

LONDON — Celia Pugh, a 50-year veteran of the communist movement, died March 4 after a long illness. She was 70. Pugh was a founding member of the Communist League in 1988 and served on its Central Committee.

She joined the League's forerunner, the International Marxist Group, at the University of Essex in 1971, her companion, Pete Rosner, said. There she helped lead solidarity with the 1972 miners strike and became nationally prominent in the fight for women's rights.

Pugh was part of the successful struggle to build communist parties in the

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

Nurses in Toronto rally for wage raise, improved conditions

TORONTO — Hundreds of nurses and their supporters took to the streets here March 2 to demand better wages, more staffing and improved conditions.

Chanting “Enough is enough!” and “If we can’t get it, shut it down!” nurses protested outside the hotel where their union, the Ontario Nurses’ Association, was attempting to negotiate with the Ontario Hospital Association. The nurses had been faced with a wage cap of no more than a 1% increase per year, imposed by the Ontario government on most public sector workers in 2019.

Following a recent strike of education workers, which was backed by a significant labor mobilization on their behalf, Bill 124, which imposed the cap, was struck down by the courts. The government is appealing the decision.

Hospital staffing levels fell further during the pandemic, leading to worse working conditions and even deeper challenges for nurses to be able to provide the care patients need and deserve.

“Nurses are fed up with this government and employers expressing appreciation for the work we do, while simultaneously failing to provide working conditions that truly show the value of what we do each day,” Interim Ontario Nurses’ Association Provincial President Bernie Robinson told the press March 3. “This system is being held together by the nurses and health care professionals who have shown incredible dedication to their patients.

“Words are empty. What counts is a contract that provides better staffing levels, wages and benefits, so that we can provide better patient care,” she said.

— Susan Berman

Masonite strikers in Quebec win solidarity in contract fight

LAC-MEGANTIC, Quebec — Two dozen pickets at the Masonite plant here warmly greeted this *Militant* worker-correspondent and three others who made the three-hour trip from Montreal to bring them solidarity and donuts Feb. 27. The factory is located up the hill

from where 47 people were killed in 2013 when a Montreal, Maine and Atlantic train derailed and blew up.

The 190 members of the Confederation of Democratic Unions (CSD), who make prefabricated doors, voted 83% to reject the employers’ latest contract offer and went on strike Feb. 17 over wages and insurance. The last contract ran out in December.

Strikers are demanding a 3 Canadian dollar (\$2.20) an hour raise for the first year, and CA\$1 each of the next two years. Starting wages are roughly CA\$23 an hour. And they want information on the medical plans offered at the company’s other plants, which the bosses haven’t delivered.

A few days before the last contract vote, Emilie Boucher, a union representative with nine years in the plant, said, “The company laid off 42 workers just to scare people. It didn’t work.”

Spirits on the line are high as drivers honk in solidarity. Vincent Audet, vice president of the city workers union, told the *Militant* he brought coffee to the line the previous week. Many other town residents know about the strike and have friends and relatives who work there. Pickets are up Monday to Friday.

— Katy LeRougetel

Quebec bus drivers strike for better wages, conditions

QUEBEC CITY — School bus drivers from union locals B.R.-CSN (Confederation of National Trade Unions) and Tremblay & Paradis-CSN who are on strike met together at the Club Social Victoria here for a solidarity lunch Feb. 24. Their strike against two bus companies began eight days earlier. They’re demanding a wage increase and hiring.

Two CSN school bus driver locals in the Terrebonne suburb of Montreal have won an agreement that includes wage raises of 30% in the first year. The fight for better wages and conditions across Quebec has been going on since 2008.

“An important point of this struggle and our demands is respect for the worker,” Helene Thibault, president of the Tremblay & Paradis-CSN union, told the *Militant*. “The relationship with our



Militant/Tony DiFelice

Hundreds of members of the Ontario Nurses’ Association picket outside contract negotiations in Toronto, March 2, demanding increased wages, more staffing and better working conditions.

employer is abominable and they do not respect us as individuals.”

One example, she said, was how the union had to fight to split one route into two at the beginning of the school year. The students were late to school, and the driver was late for her second job.

Also, if they are paid to drive 20 to 36 students back and forth on a split schedule, they’re faced with responsibilities beyond just driving. They have to manage hyperactive children and adolescents as well as those with attention-deficit disorder or autism spectrum disorder, additional work for which they aren’t paid. The drivers are demanding to be compensated for the actual time they have to work, including these additional duties.

While the private school transport companies they work for received between 15% and 30% bonuses on their contracts with the school boards during the pandemic, drivers didn’t receive any corresponding wage increase.

Parents of students have expressed solidarity with the drivers, despite the inconvenience the strike causes. Thibault said that the strikers all wanted to see the students again and return to work, and that “they don’t strike for the fun of it, but it’s the only solution.”

Members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers union and Teamsters union who came

from Montreal to express solidarity were warmly welcomed at the meeting.

— Philippe Tessier

Illinois UAW members strike Metal-Matic for union contract

BEDFORD PARK, Ill. — Some 120 members of United Auto Workers Local 588 went on strike against Metal-Matic here Feb. 22 in a fight over wages and health insurance. This is the union’s first contract fight since workers voted to join the union in June 2021. Two earlier attempts to organize a union weren’t successful. The plant here makes steel tubing for the automobile, railroad and agriculture industries, as well as others.

“Prospects are good for winning this strike,” Marco Aquileta, who has 26 years at the plant, told the *Militant*. “We need to win solidarity from other working people and their unions. Inflation is eating into our paychecks. PTC Alliance bought Metal-Matic last June and wants cuts in wages and health insurance. We don’t have a pension, just a 401(k), which is a gamble.”

PTC, a major tubing producer, took over Metal-Matic’s four production facilities in Minnesota, Ohio and Illinois.

“The company wants to change the health insurance policy so a family would have a \$4,000 yearly deductible and \$2,000 for a single worker. They also want to cut our wages by \$4 per hour if we don’t learn three additional jobs within one year,” said John Drury, the union shop chairman with 13 years in the plant. “We are on strike to stop these attacks. The company is also trying to decertify the union.”

Another striker told me, “The company sent us a letter recently urging us to cross the picket line and return to work. But I sent it back with a note, ‘Return to sender.’”

“The company has brought in management people from the Minneapolis plant to try to get some production,” said Aquileta.

Crane operator Giancarlo Gonzalez described the solidarity the strike has won. “We have had visits from UAW members from the big Ford plant, teachers union members, transportation workers. Truckers leaving the CSX railroad yard next to us often honk in support of our strike.”

Stop by and show solidarity! The picket line is up 24/7 at 7200 S. Narragansett Ave. in Bedford Park.

Messages of support can also be mailed to the union hall: UAW Local 588, 21540 Cottage Grove Ave., Chicago Heights, IL 60411.

— Dan Fein

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



March 23, 1998

Class-conscious fighters must lead opposition to military intervention in Kosovo by Washington and other imperialist powers, whether in the guise of United Nations “peacekeeping” troops, NATO soldiers, the Western European Union, or anything else.

Washington and its rivals in Europe are attempting to use the atrocities carried out by Serbian government forces in Kosovo as a pretext to intervene. Their actions have nothing to do with “humanitarian” missions.

Forging a working-class leadership with a clear political perspective is the way forward for workers and peasants in Kosovo and the other republics in Yugoslavia. Calls for imperialist intervention weaken working-class solidarity.

No to military intervention in Kosovo! Lift the sanctions against Serbia!

All imperialist troops out of Yugoslavia now!



March 23, 1973

PINE RIDGE RESERVATION, S.D. — M-16-toting FBI agents again block the roads to Wounded Knee. Fuel, electricity, and telephone service have been cut off in the latest government attempt to starve out the occupants of this blizzard-besieged village.

The chairmen representing six of the reservation’s eight districts met March 11. They announced: (1) withdrawal from “a government-controlled body — the tribal government system”; (2) withdrawal of the Oglala Sioux from the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act; and (3) declaration of national sovereignty for the Oglala Sioux nation.

Indian leaders say they will refuse to lay down their arms. “We remember what happened to Big Foot in 1890,” Russell Means said. Federal troops massacred Big Foot and 200 men, women, and children in Wounded Knee in 1890 after they laid down their arms.



March 22, 1948

The anti-communist witch hunt, which has been systematically organized by Wall Street and the government in Washington, scored two sinister successes in Detroit and Akron last week. Three workers in the Briggs plant were driven out of their jobs by a self-constituted goon squad, which accused them of being “communists.” Langston Hughes, the well-known Negro poet, was denied a hall for a lecture and a reading of his poetry, on the grounds that he was a “red.”

The local labor movement failed to take a stand against the anti-red hysteria. Nothing can be more fatal than the idea, held by some unionists, that they can use the government-inspired red-baiting campaign as a weapon against the Stalinist misleaders. Unless the labor movement takes a firm stand against the spread of the witch hunt, it is contributing to the unfolding attack against itself.

Fight for control over their future

Continued from front page

down with a rash on her stomach, face and back,” Kayla Baker said, showing us photos on her phone. “I took her to the doctor, who said she had an allergic reaction to ‘who knows what.’”

Melissa Henry, who works from home for a doctor, said she was “most worried about the health of my two kids.” She herself has been having “nose bleeds. I’ve never had them before. I want to get my house sold, get to some place healthy. That’s what it is. My son is 12 years old; I want to make sure he’s good when he’s 20.”

They talked about what they have done to clean things up. Henry said she took the \$1,000 that Norfolk Southern offered area residents and “cleaned and cleaned and cleaned. What can you do with \$1,000? I’ve had to replace everything in the house. One of the things I picked up today was new pillows, I threw the old ones out.”

Henry was proud of what working people in the area had accomplished by raising their voices and demanding some action.

Workers won an important victory against Norfolk Southern and the government. The rail bosses did everything possible to get trains moving again, generating profits. They pushed for a rapid burn-off of toxic chemicals, spreading them far and wide. Then they pushed the wrecked rail cars aside, relaid the track and started running freight again.

But the outcry from area working people forced them to reverse course. The company agreed to rip up the tracks and remove the contaminated soil underneath the tracks that trains have been running on for over three weeks.

This is proof that it’s possible for workers, farmers and small-business people to organize and act collectively in their class interests. Many residents are members of unions, and the labor movement has a real presence in the area, in Youngstown, Akron, Pittsburgh and West Virginia. These unions need to be involved, along with rail workers who battle the same corporation.

“They’re going to take the dirt out. We had to fight for that. We have to fight for everything,” Henry said. “They treat us like we’re hillbillies, but they don’t know we’re not dumb hillbillies.”

Working people want to force out into the public all the “business secrets” and other information that the railroads and the government have that pertains to their safety, health and future. As mechanic Robert Anderson told the *Militant* here, “It shouldn’t be a mystery. We’re entitled to all the information.”

A course to fight for this means estab-

lishing committees of working people — of workers, family farmers, small-business people — to pry open the secrets of the railroads, how they make their profits, their behind-the-scene deals, and how they squander the labor power of working people.

Such committees could monitor the testing of air, water, and soil, to demand specific testing and remediation. They could fight for a permanent free medical clinic in East Palestine, paid for by Norfolk Southern, with capabilities to do blood testing, with doctors specializing in reactions to chemicals.

They could join forces with rail workers fighting to take control of their workplace out of the hands of the rail bosses. A number of rail unions have taken steps to get out the truth about the profit-driven railroad and their disdain for workers and safety.

The biggest obstacle to this course — besides the rail bosses and government officials at all levels who want to keep workers out of their affairs — is the army of lawyers who have descended on the area, smelling money.

The last thing they’re interested in is working people taking control of their own destiny. This was captured best by Rene Rocha, a lawyer from the supersize personal injury firm Morgan & Morgan. Noting the obvious, that residents “see they’re not getting the truth from the politicians and the company,” Rocha gave them one hope, “the lawyers.”

No. Working people can rely on ourselves to fight this battle.

Bosses driven by profits, not safety

Norfolk Southern is having a hard time keeping out of the news. On March 4 another of their trains derailed in Ohio, this time in Springfield. This train was even bigger than the one that went off the tracks in East Palestine, 212 cars!

Twenty cars derailed. Clark County officials ordered area residents to “shelter-in-place” while the rail bosses checked out what cars had derailed. After a day, they claimed nothing had spilled, and that people there could go out.

Peter Buttigieg, the transportation secretary in Joseph Biden’s administration, who didn’t come to East Palestine for nearly three weeks after the derailment there, assured people that “we will continue to monitor closely.”

Then on March 7 Norfolk Southern conductor Louis Shuster was hit and killed by a dump truck that collided with a train at a crossing in a steel plant in Cleveland. Shuster, 46, was president of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engi-



Militant/Tony Lane

After derailment in East Palestine, Ohio, burnt-out tank cars flank both sides of rebuilt double track Feb. 12. Norfolk Southern bosses rapidly began shipping again to boost profits. Residents, rail workers committees are needed to take control over cleanup, defend their class interests.

neers and Trainmen Division 607.

“This is a devastating loss for the Shuster family as well as the members of this union,” BLET National President Eddie Hall said. “All railroad accidents are avoidable. This collision underscores the need for significant improvements in rail safety for both workers and the public.”

The National Transportation Safety Board announced it was launching an investigation into Norfolk Southern’s “safety culture,” due to the “number and significance” of this death and recent derailments.

The Federal Railroad Administration reported that 42 rail workers died on duty last year, including five on the Norfolk Southern.

Track workers have been speaking out about the lack of any safety measures provided to workers ordered to East Palestine to clear and carry out repairs to the tracks. Television footage after the derailment shows Norfolk Southern track workers working without respirators or hazmat suits.

In a letter addressed to both Buttigieg and Ohio Gov. Michael DeWine, Jonathan Long, general chair of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, wrote, “I received reports that Norfolk Southern neither offered nor provided these workers with appropriate personal protective equipment.”

“When some of the Norfolk Southern workers inquired about the appropriateness of their personal protective equipment and the safety of their working conditions, they would receive little or no response from Norfolk Southern officials,” he added.

East Palestine resident Nelson Freeze pointed to the priorities of Norfolk Southern from his vantage point. “The first thing I saw wasn’t decontamination vehicles or heavy equipment,” he told MSN.com. “It was semitrailers loaded with preformed track and they were ready to get them trains rolling. And to me that’s criminal.”

Potential for worker-farmer alliance

There was no way the track workers could know what they were dealing with. Norfolk Southern bosses didn’t release the contents of the derailed cars for hours. Flimsy placards that identified 11 of the cars were carrying hazardous chemicals — including toxic vinyl chloride that could blow up — melted away in the fire caused by the derailment.

“We are always told that nobody is to go onto a derailment site until the ‘all clear’ is given,” Jakob Forsgren, a weld-

er and track repair worker who works in and out of Lincoln, Nebraska, and is chair of Local 1320 of the BMW, told the *Militant*. “This ‘all clear’ is the assurance from the railroad officials that the site is ‘safe’ to work in and that there is no immediate danger of fire, explosion or exposure to chemicals. The fact that the workers there to clean it up were given the ‘all clear’ and were not given respirators, or even briefed that the chemicals around the area were incredibly toxic and hazardous, is infuriating but not entirely surprising. Safety takes a back seat to profits in almost every decision made.”

One key problem with Norfolk Southern’s procedures that has been revealed concerns wayside detectors that are supposed to warn train crews if an axle bearing is getting too hot and likely to fail. Rail bosses set the temperature for an alert so high that even though an axle on the train was sparking 20 miles before it got to East Palestine, the crew didn’t get an alert until it was too late to prevent the derailment.

Stephanie Griffin, a former Union Pacific carman, responsible for inspecting rail cars for problems that might endanger the train crew and people along the tracks, told the *Guardian* that in 2016 her supervisor had ordered her to stop “tagging” rail cars for repair. “He refused to bad-order cars for bad wheel bearings,” Griffin said.

The bosses wanted to eliminate any delays that cut into profits. “It’s very obvious that management is not concerned with public safety,” she said.

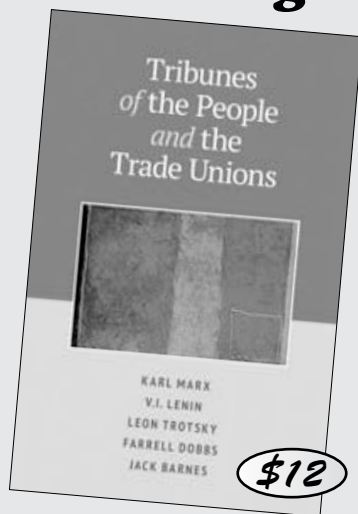
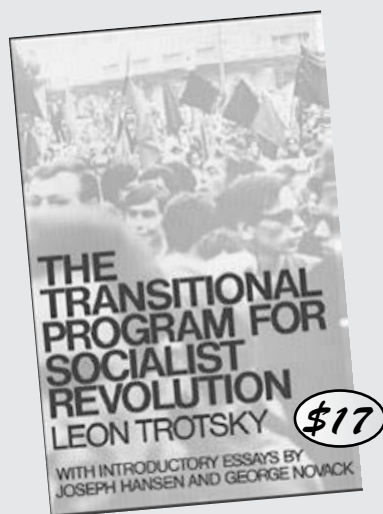
What rail unions have brought out into the open is the stakes for rail workers, and the communities they pass through, in using their unions to get more control over what happens on the job.

Such a fight includes restoring the massive cuts in the workforce that rail bosses have carried out over the last several years, to provide for adequate maintenance, inspection and operating crews to be able to work safely. To fight for trains limited to 50 cars in length, with a crew of two on the head end and two in a caboose or engine on the rear.

“I’m for more workers on the trains,” Vern Jantzen, a farmer in Plymouth, Nebraska, told the *Militant*. “It was much safer for those farming near the railroad right-of-way when rail workers were riding the rear end of the train as well as on the engine.”

The potential for a fighting alliance of rail workers, other unionists, farmers and small proprietors is real.

Recommended reading



pathfinderpress.com

Young socialists discuss class struggle with students in Cuba

BY RÓGER CALERO

HAVANA — Young socialists from the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom were invited by Cuban youth organizations for an exchange with students here Feb. 17. The lively back-and-forth took up an array of topics. The students were particularly interested in learning from their visitors about conditions facing working people and youth in their countries, about their struggles and how communist workers are participating in them.

“It’s important for Cuban youth” to hear firsthand about these experiences, said Mirthia Brossard, international relations director for the Union of Young Communists (UJC), as she welcomed the visitors.

Taking part in the exchange were some 20 students at the Higher Institute on International Relations (ISRI), where the meeting was held. They were joined by leaders of the Federation of University Students (FEU) and the UJC.

Gabrielle Prosser, who is a member of the Socialist Workers Party as well as the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers union, and works in an industrial bakery in Minneapolis, described how over the last couple of years increasing numbers of workers in the U.S. have stood up to say “Enough is enough!” in response to the brutal intensification of labor, unsustainable hours, attacks on job safety and declining real wages.

Félix Vincent Ardea, a member of the Communist League in Canada and the Teamsters union who is a train conductor in Montreal, gave examples of similar changes among working people there.

The Cuban students peppered them with questions. “In the elections in your countries, there are parties on the left and the right, but in the end they are all



Militant/Ólöf Andra Proppé

Cuban youth organizations sponsored lively discussion with young socialists from U.S., Canada and U.K. at Higher Institute on International Relations in Havana Feb. 17. Photo at right, Félix Vincent Ardea, Communist League in Canada, and Gabrielle Prosser, Socialist Workers Party.



capitalists. How do you respond to that situation?” asked one of the students.

“In face of the crisis in the world today, none of the capitalist parties offers a solution other than shifting it onto the backs of workers and farmers,” said Prosser. “We point to how workers are beginning to use our collective economic power and class solidarity, and we explain that our class needs to organize independently of all capitalist parties. We need a labor party based on our unions.

“What workers and farmers in Cuba accomplished in taking political power and carrying out a socialist revolution is an example for working people everywhere,” Prosser added. “We explain that as we encourage participation in actions demanding an immediate end to Washington’s economic war on the Cuban Revolution.”

‘Change in working class’

“A change is taking place in the working class, and that’s also true in the United Kingdom,” said Ólöf Andra Proppé, a rail worker and member of the Communist League in that country.

“Hundreds of thousands of workers in the U.K. have taken part in work stoppages and strike actions over wages and working conditions,” said

Proppé, who has joined those actions with her co-workers. “We’re starting to learn how to use and strengthen our unions and build solidarity.”

Asked if they face problems “because you are communists,” Ardea, who ran last year as a candidate of the Communist League in Canada’s parliamentary elections, said, “When we introduce ourselves as communists, most working people don’t get hung up on that word. They want to discuss the big issues facing us and what we can do together as workers.”

“Why do socialists like yourselves choose to work in these industries?” asked another student. “Workers in basic industry have the greatest economic weight, as we’ve seen, for example, when rail workers go on strike,” said Proppé. “They can shut down everything and it hits the bosses’ profits.”

Workers in industrial bakeries in the U.S., such as Kellogg’s and Frito-Lay, have waged important strikes in the last two years, “demanding more livable schedules and an end to forced overtime, giving us family time,” added Prosser.

“The U.S. government has not signed international environmental protection agreements,” noted Maday Peña Pérez, international relations director for the

FEU. “How do you address the question of environmental rights?”

“The capitalist class exploits both labor and nature, the sources of all wealth. It’s the primary source of destruction of both,” said Prosser. “To begin addressing that threat, workers need to fight for control of production at all levels.”

The students had seen news about the recent train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio. They were interested in the young socialists’ explanation of that disaster as an example of how the capitalist bosses endanger

workers and their communities, the angry response by local residents, and discussions among workers on the need to strengthen unions and fight for safe job conditions.

Several students shared their personal experiences in how the Cuban people and their revolutionary government confronted the COVID-19 pandemic, drawing on the working-class solidarity and values that a socialist revolution has made possible. They joined with other volunteers to help clean and disinfect hospitals, went door to door to check in on the health of neighbors in their communities and contributed to the collective effort that led to more than 90% of Cuba’s population being inoculated with highly effective Cuban-developed vaccines.

“All of this was done on a voluntary basis. It’s the only way you could mobilize a great army of the youth, as we did,” one student said.

The discussion continued as students eagerly got books from an array of titles brought by the young communists. These included the newest Pathfinder title, *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us*, and many issues of the Marxist magazine *New International*.

Later that afternoon, four of the students made their way to the Pathfinder stand at the Havana International Book Fair to continue discussion up to the last minute when book fair organizers closed down the site for the day. As one of them commented on the way out, “It’s good to know there are workers parties in the United States and other countries whose perspective is to make a socialist revolution.”

EU, Greek rulers responsible for deadly train crash

BY GEORGES MEHRABIAN

ATHENS, Greece — Outraged at bosses’ disregard for the lives of workers and passengers, thousands of trade unionists and others rallied outside parliament here March 5. Called by rail unions, student and other organizations, the action protested the government’s responsibility for the death of 58 people in a collision between passenger and freight trains near Larissa in northern Greece Feb. 28.

At one action in the agricultural region of Thessaly near where the derailment took place, a March 8 protest by rail and other unions was joined by a farmers’ tractorcade.

Passengers included a number of students returning to Thessaloniki from Athens after a three-day holiday weekend. Eleven rail workers, including two drivers of the freight train and two drivers of the passenger train, were among the dead. Carriages were thrown off the rails and engulfed in flames with temperatures reaching 2,370 F after a head-on collision.

The two trains had been routed on the same track and were traveling toward each other for at least 12 minutes said Yiannis Ditsas, head of the rail unions. They collided because au-

tomatic switches that divert one train onto another line to prevent a crash were not working.

Rail workers and their unions have warned for some time of the increasing dangers as a result of job cuts and the deterioration of safety measures. They have been on strike since the crash.

The lack of investment in crucial safety provisions has been a consequence of government policy over many years.

Under pressure from the International Monetary Fund and European Union, the Greek rulers used the railways as an “asset” to acquire loans needed to prevent a government collapse. It sold off rail operator Trainose in 2017 to a private, for-profit Italian company. The government retained control of the tracks. The EU had threatened it would demand the return of a 700 million euros “aid” package (\$747 million) if the sale didn’t go through. The EU is used by its dominant powers, the capitalist rulers in Germany and France, to plunder their weaker competitors in southern Europe with devastating consequences for workers.

Authorities quickly blamed the Larissa stationmaster for the collision, arresting him and charging him with negligent manslaughter. But the real reason

for the disaster is “the drive for profit, not some individual stationmaster,” Panagiotis Katsaros, an air transport worker told the *Militant*. Katsaros is president of the Union of Workers at DHL at Athens Airport. The stationmaster “was on shift alone, without adequate training or experience and without the necessary alarm and control equipment,” he said.

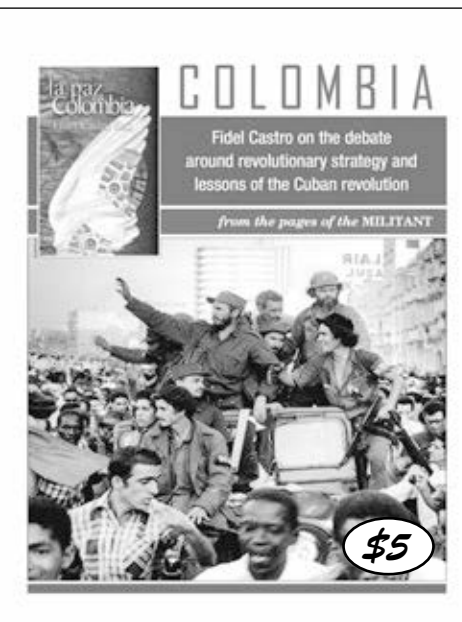
“This puts front and center the need to build and strengthen unions.”

The March 5 protest was the third action in as many days. They were joined by thousands of students. Cops used tear gas to break up the overwhelmingly peaceful march.

Three rail unions issued a joint statement March 5. The Union of Workers and Employees at Trainose, the Pan-Hellenic Union of Trainose Employees and the Pan-Hellenic Union of Operating Personnel demanded the hiring of workers on permanent contracts, proper training and the building and maintaining of rail infrastructure. These steps, the unions say, would help safeguard workers, passengers and people living near rail lines. The railroad is supposed to have 2,000 workers but is currently operating with only 750.

Following the disaster the government has announced an inquiry.

New from Pathfinder Press



pathfinderpress.com

End of decadeslong retreat of labor opens new opportunities

Oberlin conference will discuss strengthening unions, building Socialist Workers Party

BY STEVE CLARK

“Our experiences in the United States confirm that the low point of working-class and labor resistance is behind us,” said Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, in his report on the draft political resolution before the party’s December 2022 convention.

That conclusion — and its consequences for political activity, as big shifts continue in U.S. and world politics — will be at the center of a three-day International Educational Conference organized by the SWP at Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio, from June 8-11.

The conference presentations by party leaders, educational classes, and formal and informal discussion offer an opportunity for participants to deepen their political understanding of the explosive ramifications of these shifts for workers and farmers. Those at the gathering will have a chance to evaluate common experiences and increase their effectiveness in advancing the political course adopted by the convention and presented in the SWP resolution.

The resolution is the centerpiece of a new book published by Pathfinder Press, *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Social-*



Militant/Carole Lesnick
Jack Barnes at SWP December convention.

Special offer

The low point of labor resistance is behind us

THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY LOOKS FORWARD

FORCED OVERTIME NO FAMILY TIME

Shareholders don't make chips Employees do!

HONK to support Union 215

NO GREED NO GOALS

It's not 'fair', it's just 'bait!' Oppose Representative Jent

JACK BARNES MARY-ALICE WATERS STEVE CLARK

**\$7 until May 31 (normally \$10)
\$5 with ‘Militant’ subscription**

ist Workers Party Looks Forward by Barnes, Mary-Alice Waters and Steve Clark. The party is using it as part of activity to win new subscribers to the *Militant*, as well as SWP election campaigns for state and local office and campaigns by Communist Leagues in Canada and elsewhere. The book was circulated in February at events in Cuba, including a conference of editors and writers (see talk by Mary-Alice Waters in the March 6 issue).

Participating in the gathering will be members of the SWP and its sister parties in other countries, as well as workers, unionists, young people, and others they’ve been working and fighting alongside in resisting attacks by the bosses and their government.

They’ve been building and strengthening the unions through strike solidarity and other ways. They’re working with working farmers and ranchers facing crushing debt and devastation as a result of the capitalist crisis.

SWP members engage along with others in actions to defend women’s rights; in solidarity with the Ukrainian people’s defense of their national independence; against acts of Jew-hatred in the U.S. and other countries; alongside working farmers as part of building a worker-farmer alliance; in defense of Cuba’s socialist revolution and opposition to Washington’s decadeslong economic and political war against that revolution; support for ongoing protests and workers’ actions in Iran; against police killings and brutality; and other social and political actions in the interests of the working class.

Also taking part in the summer conference will be supporters of the party who help organize the production, printing, and distribution of Pathfinder books. These volunteer efforts are a decisive part of the work to produce new titles and keep in print hundreds of books by communist leaders in the U.S. and the world over.

These include works by Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky; by leaders of the Socialist Workers Party from its founding until today; and by revolutionary leaders from Malcolm X, Fidel Castro and Ernesto Che Guevara, to Thomas Sankara, Vilma Espin and Maurice Bishop.

Political opportunities

These opportunities to organize and act on the SWP’s communist course register the reversal of a decadeslong retreat in the U.S. by the working class and labor movement.

Over the past few years, there has been increased motion by workers using and building our unions. More workers and unionists are bringing to bear the class solidarity needed to effectively resist the accel-



Loren Holmes/Anchorage Daily News via AP
School bus drivers strike in Wasilla, Alaska, Jan. 26, demanding adequate heating, headlights, windshield wipers and pay. More workers today are using their unions to fight attacks of bosses and their government.

erated speedup, longer hours, attacks on job safety, inflation-battered wages, lack of steady work and social and moral blight produced by U.S. and world capitalism’s profit-driven crises of production and trade.

As the resolution points out, “Real wages, adjusted for inflation, have stagnated since the 1970s. The birth rate is falling. Life expectancy in the US has declined to seventy-six years, its lowest level in more than a quarter century. Working farmers are pushed deeper into debt and often off the land entirely.” This is a vote against capitalism’s very future.

Increased labor resistance, including hard-fought strikes, has been organized by unions in bakeries and other food industries, in the mines, in freight rail, in hospitals, shipyards, farm implement plants, among truckers and elsewhere. These fights reinforce long-term social struggles to end racist discrimination against African Americans, combat Jew-hatred and advance the emancipation of women.

The extent and forms of struggles by workers and farmers differ from one part of the imperialist world to another, but the resolution’s judgment that the low point of resistance is behind us extends well beyond North America.

That’s not a matter of predictions or prophecies. It’s a recognition that workers and other exploited producers the world over increasingly need to be prepared politically — class against class — for ongoing and deepening crises, wars and political battles.

No separate roads

At the December convention, three reports were presented to deepen discussion of the draft resolution submitted by the SWP National Committee. Barnes presented the opening political report. Mary-Alice Waters reported on “Capitalism’s erosion of the family and the working-class road to women’s emancipation.” And SWP Trade Union Director Mary Martin addressed members’ work building the trade unions and ad-

vancing a class-struggle course for the labor movement.

A central programmatic thread was the inseparable connection between the party’s revolutionary proletarian program and its activity strengthening the unions and joining in social struggles. “The class composition of the party must correspond to its class program,” wrote communist leader Leon Trotsky in 1940. That has been a foundation stone of the party since its origins in 1919, as part of the newly formed Communist International led by Lenin, Trotsky and other leaders of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia.

Only through the struggle for a proletarian party to advance the fight for workers power, the resolution and reports emphasized, can working people in the U.S. and elsewhere organize and fight effectively against the mounting wars and threats of war, from Europe, to the Pacific and Asia, the Middle East, and elsewhere.

There is no “road to peace” aside from this working-class line of march to end capitalist rule and open a future for humanity. Class-conscious workers don’t have a revolutionary policy for peacetime and a peace policy for



Militant/Lisa Rottach
From left, nursing students Jessica Forsgren, Ashley Morgan discuss way forward with SWP Chicago mayor candidate Ilona Gersh and member Naomi Craine at Jan. 22 women’s rights rally in Madison, Wisconsin. SWP explains there is no “road to Black liberation or women’s emancipation separate and apart from working-class struggle to confront capitalism’s social crises.”

wartime, as the communist movement has always explained.

Along that course, the aim must be to take the power to make war out of the hands of the bosses’ government and their twin parties, the Republicans and Democrats.

There are no common interests between the working and producing classes on the one hand, and the capitalist rulers and their parties on the other. There is no cross-class “we” — no classless road to combating today’s mounting inflation, crises of employment and housing, and bosses’ intensified speedup and assaults on job safety.

Nor any “road to either Black liberation or women’s emancipation separate and apart from the working-class struggle to confront capitalism’s social crises bearing down on working people and their families,” the resolution points out. “That, in turn, requires a class-struggle course to address the challenges and responsibilities that fall overwhelmingly on women as the bearers and nurturers of new life.”

In that regard, Waters said, there remains no better guide than what Frederick Engels, co-founder with Karl Marx of the communist workers movement, wrote in 1885: “True equality between men and women can become a reality only when the exploitation of both by capital has

been abolished and private work in the home has been transformed into a public industry.”

The battle to end women’s second class status is intertwined with transforming every aspect of the oppressive economic and social relations perpetuated by capitalism. It is integral to the working-class struggle to combat the deteriorating conditions facing more and more families — from the lack of affordable health care, housing, and child care; to the scourges of drug addiction, government-promoted gambling, domestic violence and more. Opposition to federal, state, or municipal laws restricting access to medically safe abortions is part of that broader fight.

Only along a revolutionary course — anchored in proletarian morality based on human solidarity — can social relations be transformed and replace the bourgeois morals resorted to by the ruling classes to rationalize the brutalities of imperialist rule the world over.

Working-class fight against war

From the opening of Moscow’s more than yearlong assault on Ukraine — the first full-scale war in Europe since World War II — the SWP has actively campaigned for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Moscow’s troops.

The Putin regime aims to obliterate the Ukrainian people’s very existence as an independent and sovereign nation, reimprisoning them in a revived “Great Russian Empire.” As Ukrainians courageously resist the invasion, Moscow has stepped up genocidal missile and drone attacks on apartment buildings and other civilian targets, including infrastructure for electricity, heat, clean water, sanitation, transport and other necessities of civilian life.

The party demands the withdrawal of all U.S. troops and both conventional and nuclear arms and missile systems from NATO-member countries and elsewhere in Europe. It calls for an end to the sweeping embargo imposed on Russia by the U.S., European and other imperialist ruling classes. Those economic and financial sanctions fall most heavily on working people, who along with Russian soldiers, can be won as allies in repel-



Militant/Deborah Liatos
SWP member Barbara Bowman, right, joins Feb. 24 Los Angeles march defending Ukraine independence. Party campaigns for immediate, unconditional withdrawal of all of Moscow’s troops.

ling Moscow’s invasion.

Washington is strengthening alliances with imperialist and other capitalist governments in the Pacific and Asia to defend their profits and prerogatives, as Beijing’s capitalist rulers press their own economic and military expansion. Threats are growing over Taiwan, over competing claims to sovereignty of island chains in the South China Sea, and over the buildup of U.S. military forces from South Korea to the Philippines and Australia.

Across the Middle East, Tehran’s drive to extend the bourgeois clerical regime’s counterrevolution poses the danger of an expanded conflagration. Tehran is also providing lethal drones and other technical assistance to Moscow’s massive campaign of missiles targeting Ukraine’s civilian population.

These perils are multiplied by the Iranian rulers’ declared aim of obliterating the state of Israel, its promotion of rising Jew-hatred worldwide, and its rapid advances in developing a strategic nuclear arsenal and ballistic missile delivery system.

The greatest curb to these dangers is Iran’s working people — of Persian, Kurdish, Azerbaijani, Baluchi and other national origins — whose massive mobilizations since late 2022 have surpassed in size and scope even those of the previous few years.

Washington continues its some 65-year-long economic, trade, financial and political war on the toilers of Cuba, carried out by every Democratic and Republican administration since the 1959 Cuban Revolution. Over those decades, the SWP has relentless-

ly fought for an immediate and unconditional end to these hostile U.S. government policies. As the SWP resolution says, the U.S. rulers’ message “to working people here and everywhere is unvarnished: ‘This is what will be done to you if you work and fight to emulate Cuba’s socialist revolution.’”

“Whether in the pages of the *Militant*, or an SWP campaign speech, at a doorstep or on a picket line, or during the Havana International Book Fair and other activities in Cuba,” says the resolution, “what we say and what we do with regard to the Cuban Revolution does not begin by asking, ‘How is Cuba doing?’” Instead, revolutionists “ask and answer: ‘How are we doing?’”

“That above all is what revolutionary Cubans want to know. How well are we advancing as a proletarian party on our course to emulate the historic accomplishments of the Cuban toilers?”

The working class in the U.S. and other countries must fight for our independent class interests, for those of our exploited allies, as well as for each other — along a road to the revolutionary conquest of state power. A road to the world socialist revolution. Otherwise, conflicts among rival national ruling classes will become more explosive and dangerous to all humanity.

Constitutional freedoms

The same independent working-class course is necessary to defend the freedoms protected by the U.S. Constitution, a fight that is at the center of the class struggle in the United States today, the SWP resolution says.

Continued on page 10



Militant/Arthur Hughes
International Educational Conference in Ohio, June 2022. Building unions, organizing labor solidarity and expanding the reach of the *Militant* and books by revolutionary leaders will be centerpieces of this year’s conference at Oberlin College.

End of the long retreat of labor

Continued from page 9

The rights and liberties needed and used by working people weren't "given to us" in the Constitution. Many freedoms had been won by the people centuries *before* the United States was established. Others were conquered by farmers, workers and enslaved toilers in the course of the first and second American revolutions (the War of Independence, and the Civil War and Radical Reconstruction), as well as class battles since.

Compelling the rulers to put these freedoms down in writing in the Constitution — including the first 10 amendments, and the post-Civil War 13th, 14th and 15th amendments — was a conquest by working people. Doing so, the SWP resolution says, introduced "a degree of rule by law and written boundaries on the rulers' license to run roughshod over popular and regional interests, rural as well as urban, and other expressions of social, cultural, religious, race and national diversity among the toiling majority of a vast continent."

"The proletarian party's unconditional defense of the constitutional freedom of worship," the resolution emphasizes, "is indivisible from its defense of freedom of speech and assembly."

Working class and its generations

The SWP's program is grounded in the party's confidence in the working class and its new and coming generations.

"This is the opposite of the course of bourgeois and middle-class 'population bomb' crusaders," the resolution says. Such anti-working-class "overpopulation" demagoguery is "rife among bourgeois and middle-class 'environmentalists,' climate doom-sayers, scientists and organizations claiming to champion women's rights. This includes 'counseling' working-class women and their spouses, often misrepresented as family planning, to bring fewer children into the world."

More than a century earlier, Russian Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin had denounced "the completely reactionary nature and ugliness" of such an outlook. The communist leader contrasted it to "that of 'the class-

conscious worker,' who is confident in 'the working-class movement and its aims' and who says instead: 'We are already laying the foundation of a new edifice and our children will complete its construction.'"

And "their children, and their children!" the SWP resolution adds.

That's where the eyes of class-conscious workers are focused. Our eyes are on our class, on our fighting alliance with farmers and other exploited producers, here and the world over. Our eyes are on our struggles, on our unions and on building and strengthening the working-class movement.

The SWP refuses to subordinate class-against-class solidarity, working-class independence and our proletarian internationalist course to an alleged "choice" as to whether the Putin regime in Moscow or the relatively stronger government in Beijing has "more to offer" in a so-called multipolar world of rival capitalist powers and the wealthy ruling families they defend.

Labor party based on the unions

During the Georgia runoff for U.S. Senate following the November elections, the bosses and their beholden newspapers and TV networks tried to convince working people we had a stake in the outcome of the race between the Democratic and Republican nominees, Raphael Warnock and Herschel Walker (for the first time ever in a U.S. Senate election, a contest between two candidates each of whom was African American).

But working people had no stake whatsoever in that December 2022 race or its outcome. There was no "lesser evil" for the working class and unions — in that Georgia contest, or in any other between the capitalist parties elsewhere in the U.S.

What we do have a stake in is forging a party that speaks and acts in the interests of the working class and oppressed, independent of *any* of the bosses' political parties and candidates. A party that rejects the politics of resentment, which is demagogically used by both parties of the exploiters to try to pit working people and insecure layers of the middle class against each other.

That's why the Socialist Workers



Cuban Council of State

Workers in Havana carry coffins representing nationalization of U.S. companies, deepening their revolution, imposing workers control of production, August 1960. The Socialist Workers Party points to Cuba's socialist revolution, and the leadership of Fidel Castro, as an example.

Party advocates and explains to workers in the U.S. — through the *Militant*, SWP election campaigns and to anyone its members are fighting alongside — the need for a labor party based on our unions.

Building the unions

The resolution adopted by the December convention was edited for publication in the new book in light of the discussion and ongoing lessons from the party's experience in the class struggle. The most substantial strengthening was to the final section on the activity by party members alongside others in the unions to build the labor movement.

"We make every effort to conduct ourselves as actively engaged, careful, knowledgeable, and competent trade unionists," the resolution says.

"That's our job both as party members and members of our unions. That's our proletarian orientation and Marxist continuity, tested and confirmed in practice by the class-struggle leadership of the Teamsters battles in the 1930s and by our trade union work ever since, including during the turn to industry carried out by the party starting in the mid-1970s."

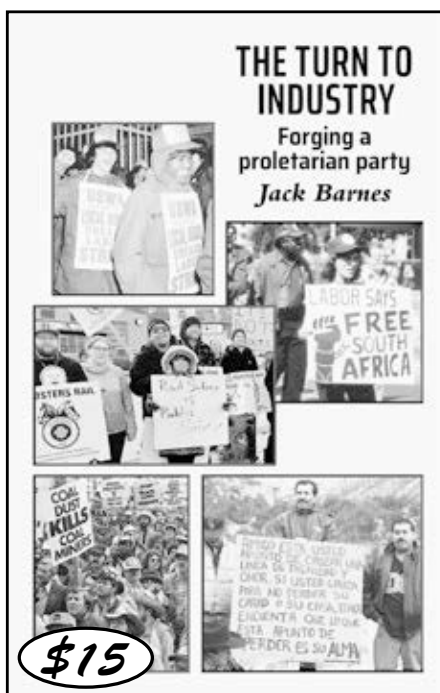
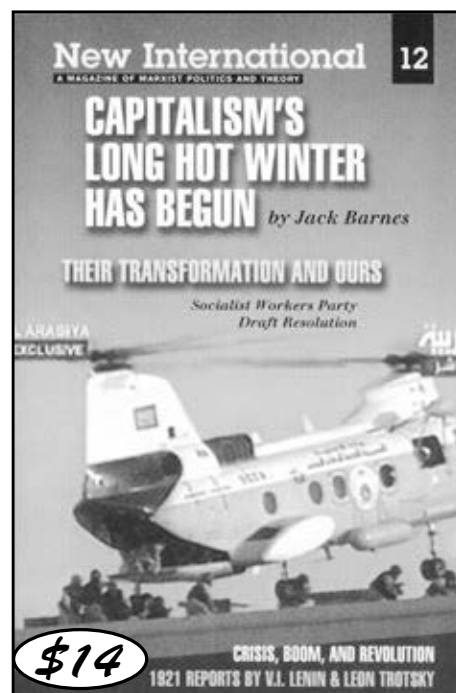
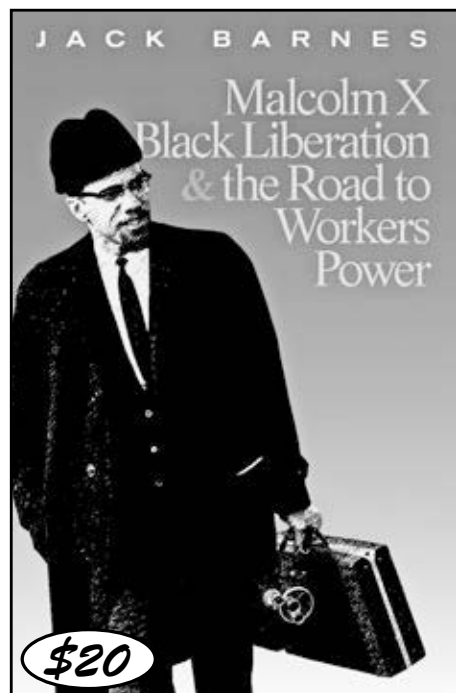
The Low Point In Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward opens with an article from the *Militant* last year reporting on the June 2022 International Active Workers Conference in Ohio, organized by the SWP. Some

350 working people from 11 countries participated. Readers of the *Militant* interested in taking part in the coming Oberlin conference will get a picture here of the kinds of discussions and activities organized at these gatherings.

SWP branches are beginning efforts this spring to win new subscribers to this working-class newsweekly and to get the new book into the hands of as many working people as possible. Assessing the results and preparing to reach out even more broadly in the summer and fall will be a centerpiece of the Active Workers Conference, including the final five months of activity by SWP election campaigns for state and local office — from the New Jersey State Senate, to mayoral races in Chicago, Philadelphia and Fort Worth, Texas. And Communist League campaigns in Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom.

If you'd like to join in the next steps to build and recruit to the Socialist Workers Party and world communist movement, contact one of the party branches in the directory on page 11.

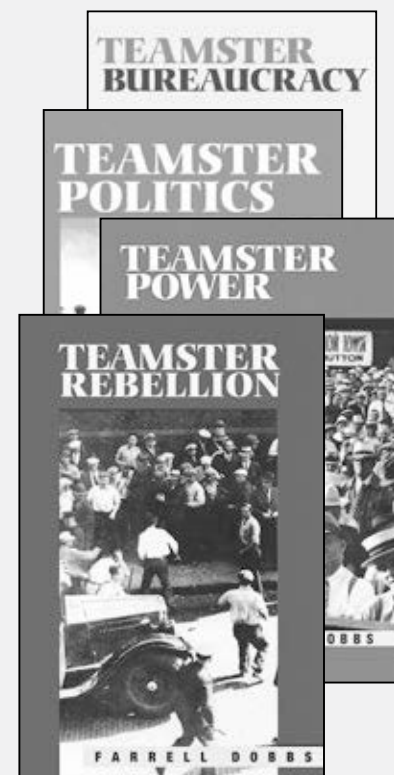
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‘Decisive battles for future of humanity will be fought in the US’

Speeches to the Party: The Revolutionary Perspective and the Revolutionary Party by James P. Cannon is one of Pathfinder’s Books of the Month for March. Cannon, then national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, explained the prospects for working-class revolutionary struggle, answering the U.S. rulers’ boasts of perpetual domination following their bloody victory in the second imperialist world war. The excerpt is from the SWP’s 1946 basic programmatic document, “Theses on the American Revolution.” It helps explain why, even as the power of U.S. imperialism wanes today, the working-class battle to take political power here remains decisive. Copyright © 1973 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY JAMES P. CANNON

The United States, the most powerful capitalist country in history, is a component part of the world capitalist system and is subject to the same general laws. It suffers from the same incurable diseases and is destined to share the same fate. The overwhelming preponderance of American imperialism does not exempt it from the decay of world capitalism, but on the contrary acts to involve it ever more deeply, inextricably, and hopelessly. U.S. capitalism can no more escape from the revolutionary consequences of world capitalist decay



Minneapolis Teamsters meet after winning May 1934 strike battle. Cannon said “sweeping movement” that built industrial unions showed revolutionary potential of U.S. working class.

than the older European capitalist powers. The blind alley in which world capitalism has arrived, and the U.S. with it, excludes a new organic era of capitalist stabilization. The dominant world position of American imperialism now accentuates and aggravates the death agony of capitalism as a whole. ...

The role of America in the world is decisive. Should the European and colonial revolutions, now on the order of the day, precede in point of time the culmination of the struggle in the U.S., they would immediately be confronted with the necessity of defending their conquests against the economic and military assaults of the American imperialist monster. The ability of the victorious insurgent peoples everywhere to maintain themselves would depend to a high degree on the strength and fighting capacity of the revolutionary labor movement in America. The American workers would then be obliged to come to their aid, just as the Western European working class came to the aid of the Russian Revolution and saved it by blocking full-scale imperialist military assaults upon the young workers’ republic.

But even should the revolution in Europe and other parts of the world be once again retarded, it will by no means signify a prolonged stabilization of the world capitalist system. The issue of socialism or capitalism will not be finally decided until it is decided in the U.S. Another retardation of the proletarian

revolution in one country or another, or even one continent or another, will not save American imperialism from its proletarian nemesis at home. The decisive battles for the communist future of mankind will be fought in the U.S.

The revolutionary victory of the workers in the U.S. will seal the doom of the senile bourgeois regimes in every part of our planet, and of the Stalinist bureaucracy, if it still exists at the time. The Russian Revolution raised the workers and colonial peoples to their feet. The American revolution with its hundredfold greater power will set in motion revolutionary forces that will change the face of our planet. ...

The American workers have the advantage of being comparatively free, especially among the younger and most militant layers, from reformist prejudices. The class as a whole has not been infected with the debilitating poison of reformism, either of the classic “Socialist” variety or the latter-day Stalinist brand. As a consequence, once they proceed to action, they more readily accept the most radical solutions. No important section of the class, let alone the class as a whole, has been demoralized by defeats. Finally, this young and mighty power is being drawn into the decisive phases of the class struggle at a tempo that creates unparalleled premises for mass radicalization. ...

It is true that this class, in many respects the most advanced and progressive in the world, has not yet taken the

road of independent political action on a mass scale. But this weakness can be swiftly overcome. Under the compulsion of objective necessity not only backward peoples but backward classes in advanced countries find themselves driven to clear great distances in single leaps. As a matter of fact, the American working class has already made one such leap which has advanced it far ahead of its old positions.

The workers entered the 1929 crisis as an unorganized, atomized mass imbued with illusions concerning “rugged individualism,” “private initiative,” “free enterprise,” “the American Way,” etc., etc. Less than 10 percent of the class as a whole was organized on the trade union field (fewer than 3 million out of 33 million in 1929). ...

As a consequence, the 1929 crisis found the working class helpless and impotent. For three years the masses remained stunned and disoriented by the disaster. Their resistance was extremely limited and sporadic. But their anger and resentment accumulated. The next five years (1933–37), coincident with a partial revival of industry, witnessed a series of gigantic clashes, street fights and sit-down strikes — an embryonic civil war — the end result of which was a leap, a giant leap, for millions of workers from nonexistence as an organized force to trade union consciousness and organization. Once fairly started, the movement for unionism snowballed, embracing today almost 15 million in all the basic industries.

In one leap — in a brief decade — the American workers attained trade union consciousness on a higher plane and with mightier organizations than in any other advanced country. ... Under the impact of great events and pressing necessities the American workers will advance beyond the limits of trade unionism and acquire political class consciousness and organization in a similar sweeping movement. ...

Given an objectively revolutionary situation, a proletarian party — even a small one — equipped with a precisely worked out Marxist program and firm cadres can expand its forces and come to the head of the revolutionary mass movement in a comparatively brief span of time. This too was proved conclusively — and positively — by the experiences of the Russian Revolution in 1917.

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March
BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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11

Profit-driven hospital bosses cut back on maternity wards

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Bosses at hospitals in rural areas are shuttering maternity wards, claiming it's no longer profitable to maintain them. This throws into disarray the health and lives of millions of women, their families and their newborn babies.

The employers' actions come as maternal deaths rise here at a higher rate than in any other industrialized country, more than one death for every 5,000 live deliveries. More women are also developing life-threatening complications. These conditions fall overwhelmingly on working-class women.

A third of all counties in the U.S. are considered "maternity care deserts," according to an October report by the March of Dimes, without obstetric care, birth centers, obstetrician-gynecologists and certified nurse midwives. Almost 7 million women of childbearing age reside in these counties.

Fewer than half of women in rural areas can find prenatal care within 30 miles, according to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

"Three days before Christmas, the only hospital in this remote city on the Yakima Indian Reservation abruptly closed its maternity unit without con-

sulting the community, the doctors who delivered babies there or even its own board," reported a *New York Times* article from Toppenish, Washington.

At least 35 women were scheduled to give birth at Astria Toppenish Hospital there in January, and the closure created a crisis for many soon-to-be mothers. Ambulance services are unreliable and sparse, with long waits and vast distances to travel to get to another hospital.

After acquiring the hospital, company owners at Astria had said they would keep maternity services available for at least a decade. Now they say they can't afford to. "There will be lives lost — people need to know that," Leslie Swan, a doula, who helps pregnant women and their families at the time of birth, told the *Times*.

By 2020, one-half of all rural community hospitals did not provide obstetrics care, the American Hospital Association said. And this trend has accelerated over the past years "as hospitals from Maine to California have jettisoned maternity units, mostly in rural areas," reported the *Times*.

Women living in rural areas are three times as likely to die during pregnancy and the critical year after-



National Union of Healthcare Workers

Protest against closing Petaluma Valley Hospital maternity ward in northern California, Feb. 15.

ward than those living closer to hospitals that provide care, said a study of mothers in Louisiana.

Shantel Jones called the Windham Community Memorial Hospital in Connecticut, a few blocks from where she lived, when she went into labor in 2020. But the hospital told the ambulance driver they had closed the maternity unit and to take Jones to Norwich, a 30-minute drive away. They didn't make it. She gave birth on the roadside. The Norwich hospital was then unable to give the baby boy the intensive care he required and they embarked on a further 30-minute trip to a hospital in Hartford. Mother

and baby are fine now.

"I didn't know what was going to happen," Shantel's mother, Michelle Jones, told Vox Media. "When you have a city full of women who have to have babies, how are you going to do that?"

Hospital bosses' decision to protect profits at the expense of women's lives underlines the fact that there is no road to women's emancipation "separate and apart from the working-class struggle to confront the crises bearing down on working people and our families," as Socialist Workers Party leaders Jack Barnes, Mary-Alice Waters and Steve Clark write in the new book *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward*. "That, in turn, requires a class-struggle course to address the challenges and responsibilities that fall overwhelmingly on women as the bearers and nurturers of new life."

In addition to closing pregnancy services, increasing numbers of rural hospitals are shutting down entirely. More than 179 rural hospitals nationwide closed between 2005 and 2020.

As battle rages in Bakhmut, Defend Ukraine independence!

Continued from front page

pleted, the outfit's elite forces have been ordered into battle alongside the conventional Russian army.

"The enemy would send 20 guys into attack six to seven times a day," Oleksandr, a Ukrainian company commander, told the *New York Times*. "They don't care about men."

"Even in Russia, they don't have enough men who seek suicide on our land," Ukrainian Lt. Vladyslav, whose company is part of defending Bakhmut, told the *Wall Street Journal*.

In a three-week battle in February, Moscow's invading forces failed to capture the coal mining town of Vuhledar, 90 miles south of Bakhmut. The biggest tank battle of the war so far saw some 130 Russian tanks and armored personnel carriers destroyed.

"What they did wrong was come to Ukraine," tank crew member, Dmytro Hrebenok, 20, said. Without any formal training on armored vehicles, the Ukrainian volunteer learned from practice "gained in the field." Like tens of thousands of volunteers, mainly from the working class, he's determined to do what's necessary to defend his country's independence. In contrast, Russian crews are mostly conscripts ordered to invade another country and to try to subjugate its people.

A group of Russian soldiers sent a video to Putin denouncing the military command's conduct of the war after their huge losses.

Unionists in Ukraine face attack

Many union members have been "mobilized into the Armed Forces of Ukraine. They are on the frontline of defense," Pavlo Holota, from the Independent Union of Mineworkers of Ukraine, told the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign March 4. The union is helping get supplies to its members at the front.

The Putin regime "seeks to destroy Ukraine as a state and Ukrainians as a

nation. To destroy our culture and our history," Holota said. "Victory over Russia is a top priority, but we cannot remain silent about the problems of the workers either."

In September, Holota helped lead a miners strike in Novolynsk, in the west, the first major action by workers since the invasion. Capitalists and their government are pushing laws that undercut workers' rights in Ukraine to try to blunt their ability to fight nonpayment of wages and unsafe conditions. Ukrainians are "united with other peoples around them," Holota said, pointing to Putin's expansionist course. If Moscow "will conquer Ukraine, it will not stop."

Thousands protested in Tbilisi, Georgia, March 7, chanting "No to the Russian law," after parliament began debating a law that would force some organizations to register as "foreign agents."

"We don't want to be part of Russia again," Demetre Shanshiashvili told Reuters at the Tbilisi protest, referring to the two centuries Georgia was oppressed in the czarist prison house of nations. In 2008 Moscow invaded again, seizing a fifth of the country.

The impact of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine continues to shake the capitalist world order. At a Feb. 23 U.N. vote on a resolution demanding Russian forces leave Ukraine, 141 nations voted in favor. The governments of 32 countries abstained, including China, India, Vietnam and Cuba, as well as the Central Asian republics. In the "no" vote, Moscow was joined by Belarus, North Korea, Syria, and three others.

President Joseph Biden met German Chancellor Olaf Scholz March 3. The White House said Washington and Berlin are in "lock step" in backing the Ukrainian government. But, in fact, both of the imperialist rivals have sought ways to induce Kyiv to cede territory to Moscow in order to end the conflict.

Inside Russia individuals continue to hold placards opposing the inva-

sion, despite Putin's clampdown and arrest of thousands of anti-war protesters. Recently they've been joined by people in over 200 cities that have hung thousands of green ribbons, anti-war symbols, in public places. One organizer said the ribbons helped to show those opposed to the war that "there are a lot of us."

Fight against prison ban wins support

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bilitative objectives" of the prison. One is an article on a New York City nurses strike, the other on the "Women, life, freedom" protests in Iran.

The Florida Press Association represents all the daily and most of the weekly newspapers in the state.

The American Civil Liberties Union National Prison Project and ACLU of Florida also wrote to protest the ban. They noted that courts have ruled "the First Amendment protects the 'flow of information to prisoners' including the independent rights of publishers, authors" and others to "communicate with incarcerated audiences."

The Florida Press Association and the ACLU also called on authorities to stop blocking prisoners at Wakulla and Charlotte prisons from getting the *Militant* without giving either the inmate or the paper any written notification of impoundment, in violation of the prison system's own rules.

Miami-based artist Rosa Garmendia said the bans are a "blatant violation of the constitutional protections of freedom of the press and the right of inmates."

Five members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Union Local 1 at a factory in Chicago wrote, saying, "Inmates have the right to read whatever they want, including the *Militant* newspaper."

"Are Blackwater officials somehow offended by such terms as 'capitalist

or 'repressive,'" when referring to Iran, the *Militant's* attorney, David Goldstein, asks in his appeal of the ban. "Do Blackwater officials contend they can censor any reporting on work stoppages" like those of the nurses, he asked.

Saritza Legault, the prison's library services administrator, informed Goldstein they will review the impoundment March 9.

"The range of letters opposing the ban is a reflection of the broad support for the rights of prisoners to read literature of their choosing, to form their own opinions, to be part of the world," said *Militant* editor John Studer. "And for the paper's right to have subscribers behind bars and to present them our working-class views."

"By the time you read this article, we'll know if we have to step up the fight to defend our constitutional rights or if we will be celebrating another victory," he said. "Go to themilitant.com for the latest update."

In the meantime, keep those letters coming! Unions, groups of co-workers, defenders of political rights and others should send letters calling on Florida prison officials to lift the bans.

Send letters to Saritza.Legault@fdc.myflorida.com or via post office mail to Florida Department of Corrections Literature Review Committee, 501 South Calhoun Street, Tallahassee, FL 32399-2500. Please send a copy to the *Militant*.